Baby Steps

Created by Katsuki Hikaru

and brought to you by

Fallen Angels
http://fascans.com/

&

Angelic Scans
http://angelicscans.net/

Raw Provider
FA

Translator
Scruffy8642

Proofrender
Tranizard

Typesetter
Bentoki

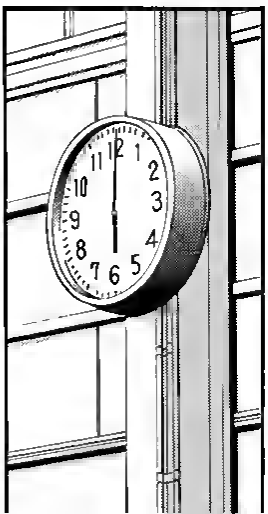
Redrawer
NESMO

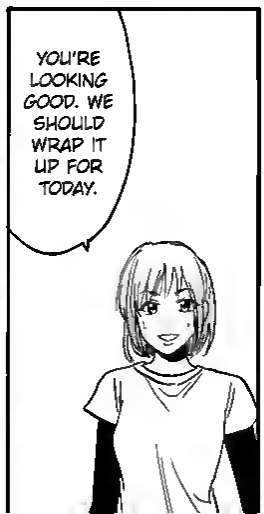
Cleaner
ManhHai090

Quality Checker
Kyou Kai

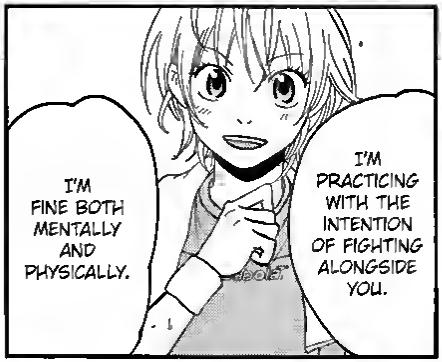
PLEASE CONSIDER BUYING THIS MANGA TO SUPPORT THE AUTHOR WHEN IT IS AVAILABLE IN YOUR COUNTRY!

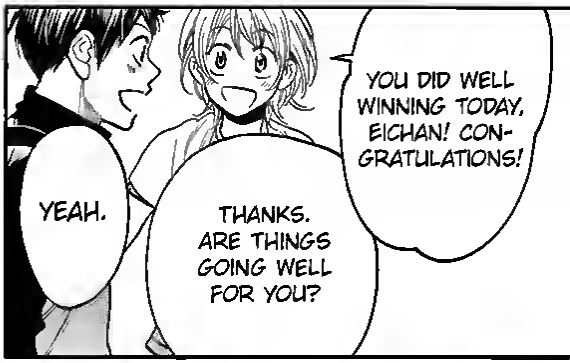
#302 Basis



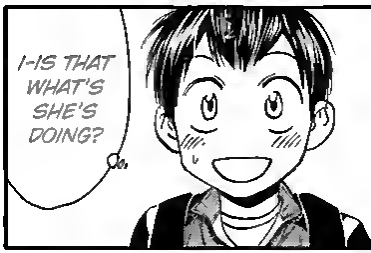


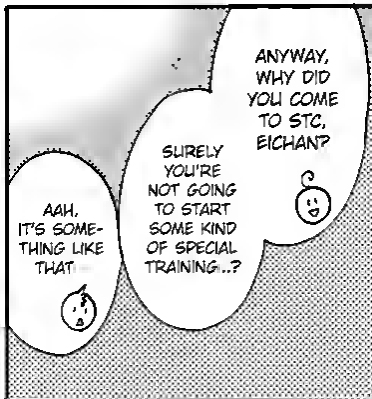
OH, GOOD WORK TODAY, NATCHAN.
AH!


I'M FINE BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY.
I'M PRACTICING WITH THE INTENTION OF FIGHTING ALONGSIDE YOU.

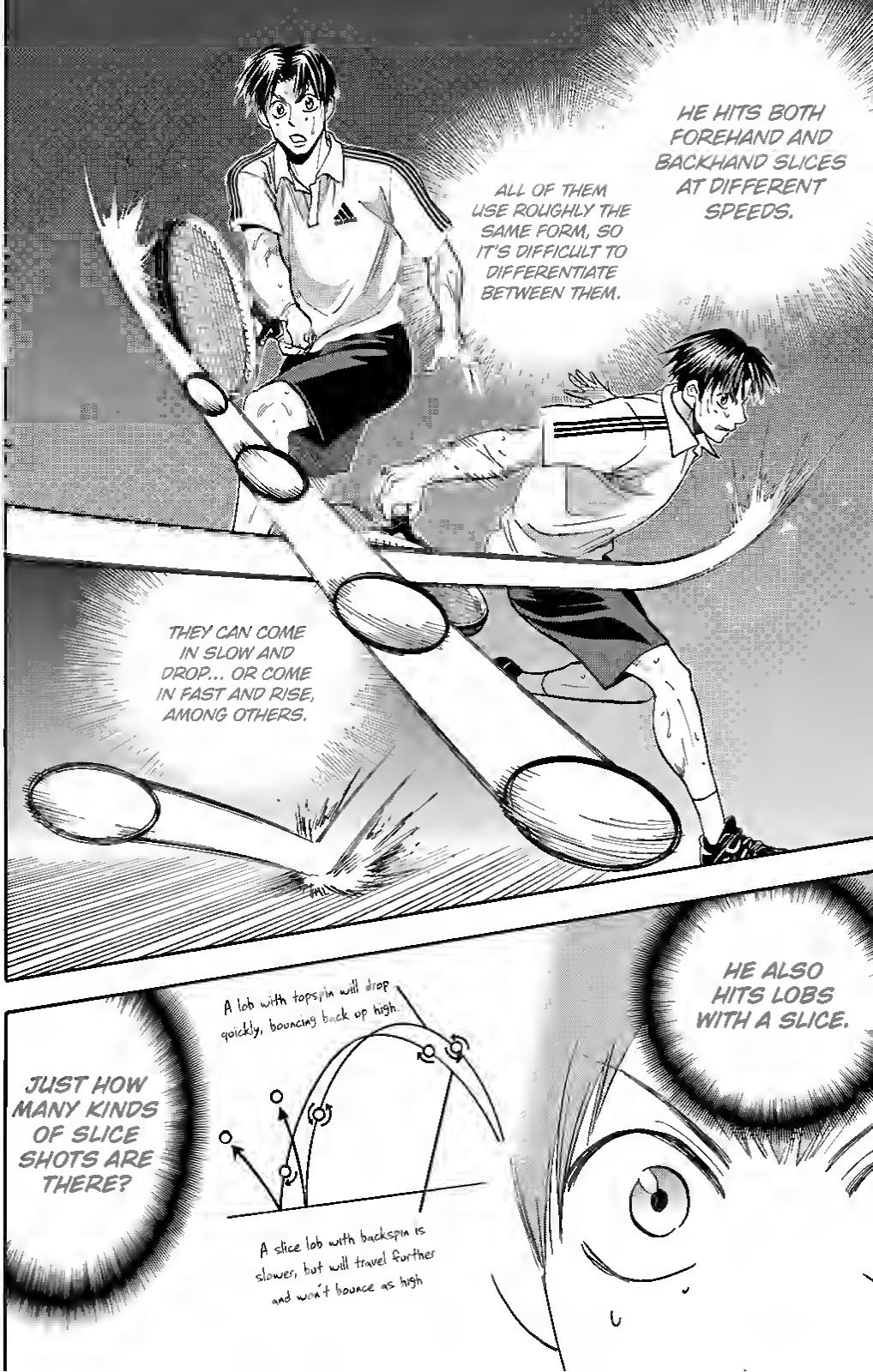

YOU DID WELL WINNING TODAY, EICHAN! CONGRATULATIONS!
YEAH.
THANKS. ARE THINGS GOING WELL FOR YOU?

ALL THE RECORDINGS I HAVE OF ASANO-SAN'S MATCHES.
HEEY, MARUO! I'VE GOT THEM ALL!


I-IS THAT WHAT'S SHE'S DOING?

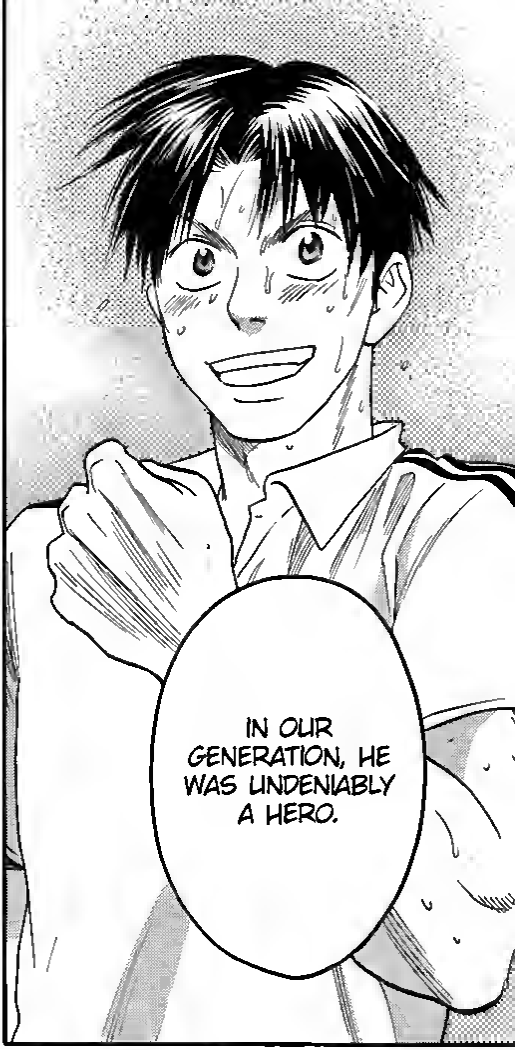

ANYWAY, WHY DID YOU COME TO STC, EICHAN?
SURELY YOU'RE NOT GOING TO START SOME KIND OF SPECIAL TRAINING..?
AAH. IT'S SOMETHING LIKE THAT

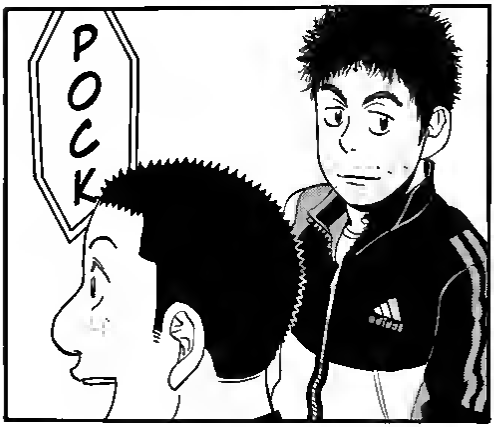
POCK
POCK
POCK
STRONG PLAYERS ARE RECORDED ALL THE TIME, SO THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF DATA.
POCK
WHOA, HE'S GOOD.
POCK
ゴク

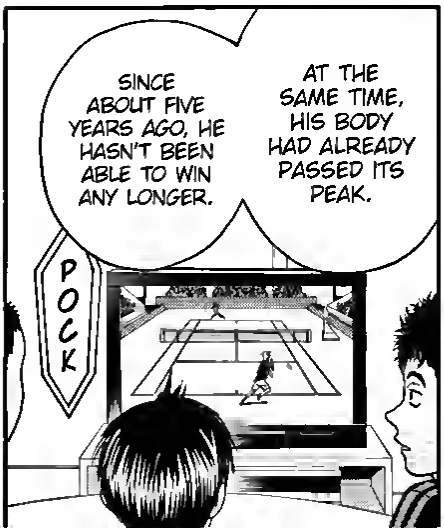

HE HITS BOTH FOREHAND AND BACKHAND SLICES AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS.
ALL OF THEM USE ROUGHLY THE SAME FORM, SO IT'S DIFFICULT TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THEM.
THEY CAN COME IN SLOW AND DROP... OR COME IN FAST AND RISE, AMONG OTHERS.
HE ALSO HITS LOBS WITH A SLICE.
JUST HOW MANY KINDS OF SLICE SHOTS ARE THERE?
A lob with topspin will drop quickly, bouncing back up high.
A slice lob with backspin is slower, but will travel further and won't bounce as high

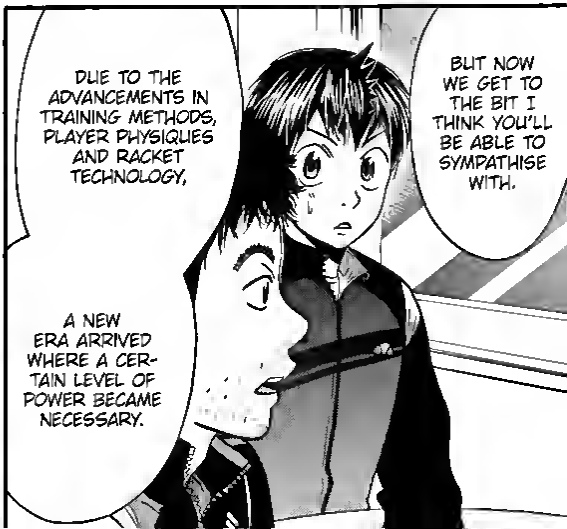
THIS IS ONE OF HIS BETTER KNOWN MATCHES, FROM 10 YEARS AGO... WHEN HE WAS 25.
AMONGST THE MANY JAPANESE WHO WERE GETTING OVERWHELMED WITH POWER AT THE WORLD STAGE BY STRONG OPPONENTS, ASANO-SAN WAS STILL A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT.
WITH THAT SMALL FRAME OF HIS, HIS APPEARANCE AS HE COUNTERED POWER USING TECHNIQUE AS A WEAPON...
WAS A SOURCE OF ADMIRATION AMONG MANY JAPANESE TENNIS PLAYERS.

!!

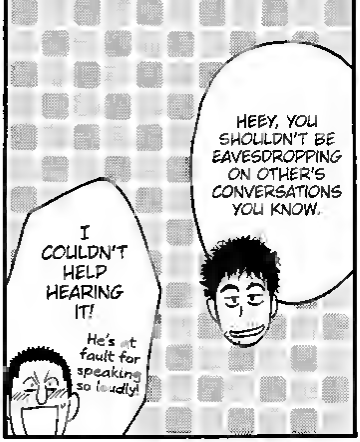

IN OUR GENERATION, HE WAS UNDENIABLY A HERO.


POCK


SINCE ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, HE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO WIN ANY LONGER.
AT THE SAME TIME, HIS BODY HAD ALREADY PASSED ITS PEAK.
POCK


DUE TO THE ADVANCEMENTS IN TRAINING METHODS, PLAYER PHYSIQUES AND RACKET TECHNOLOGY,
A NEW ERA ARRIVED WHERE A CERTAIN LEVEL OF POWER BECAME NECESSARY.
BUT NOW WE GET TO THE BIT I THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SYMPATHISE WITH.

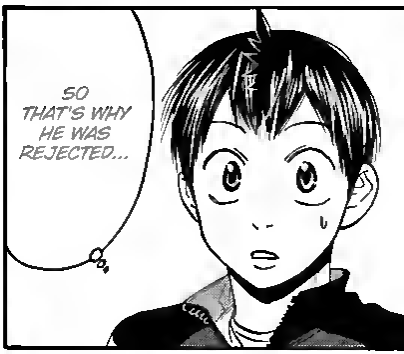
YESTERDAY IT FELT LIKE ASANO-SAN WAS PURPOSELY HITTING BALLS WITH POWERFUL SPIN IN ORDER TO MAKE BETTER USE OF HIS SLICE.
AH, JUST BEFORE I TOLD BRO ABOUT THIS, BUT...
.....
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, YOU'RE NOT A PLAYER WHO USUALLY FIGHTS WITH POWER, BUT YOU MAY END UP DOING SO IN THIS UPCOMING MATCH.
THE RESULT MAY BE SIMILAR TO YOU IN THAT HE NOW SPECIALIZES IN CHANGING THE PACE, MARUO.
I SEE...
THAT MEANS HE'S STILL TRYING TO DEVELOP HIMSELF.
EH?
AH, THEY DID SAY SOMETHING ABOUT THAT. .
TRUTH IS, TODAY I WITNESSED ASANO-SAN PROPOSE AND THEN GET TOTALLY REJECTED.
I WASN'T SURE WHETHER I SHOULD SAY THIS OR NOT...
そわそわ
ALSO...
WHAT?
?


HEEY, YOU SHOULDN'T BE EAVESDROPPING ON OTHER'S CONVERSATIONS YOU KNOW.
I COULDN'T HELP HEARING IT!
He's at fault for speaking so loudly!

I CAN FINALLY HAVE USE OF THE NEW SKILLS I'VE BEEN PRACTICING IN REAL MATCHES.
I WON'T SAY IT LIKE THAT.
THOSE UNSATISFACTORY REPORTS FOR YOU.
WOULD YOU MARRY ME?
A GOOD POSSE?
I HEARD HIM SAY, "IF I WIN THIS TOURNAMENT, WOULD YOU RECONSIDER MARRYING ME?"
ACTUALLY, IT SEEMED MORE LIKE IT WAS HIS SECOND PROPOSAL AND HE WAS BEING REJECTED A SECOND TIME...

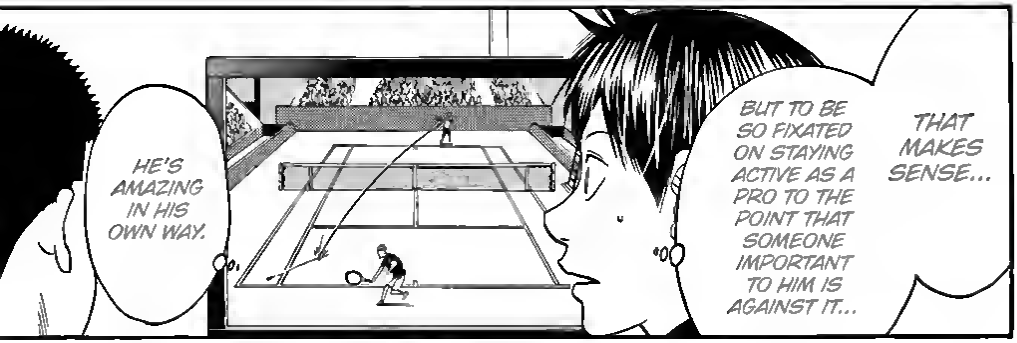
THEN HIS GIRLFRIEND WAS SUPER ANGRY SAYING HE WAS ONLY THINKING ABOUT HIMSELF.
I HEARD HE RECEIVES A LOT OF INVITATIONS FROM SPONSORS, BEING A POPULAR PLAYER WHO WAS ONCE IN JAPAN'S TOP 10 AND ALL. BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON HE TURNED THEM ALL DOWN.
ANYWAY, IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S FIXATED ON REMAINING ACTIVE AS A PRO.

AND ASANO-SAN WHO DESPERATELY WANTS TO REMAIN A PRO, HUH.
SO WE'LL HAVE A FIGHT BETWEEN MARUO WHO DESPERATELY WANTS TO BECOME A PRO...


SO THAT'S WHY HE WAS REJECTED...

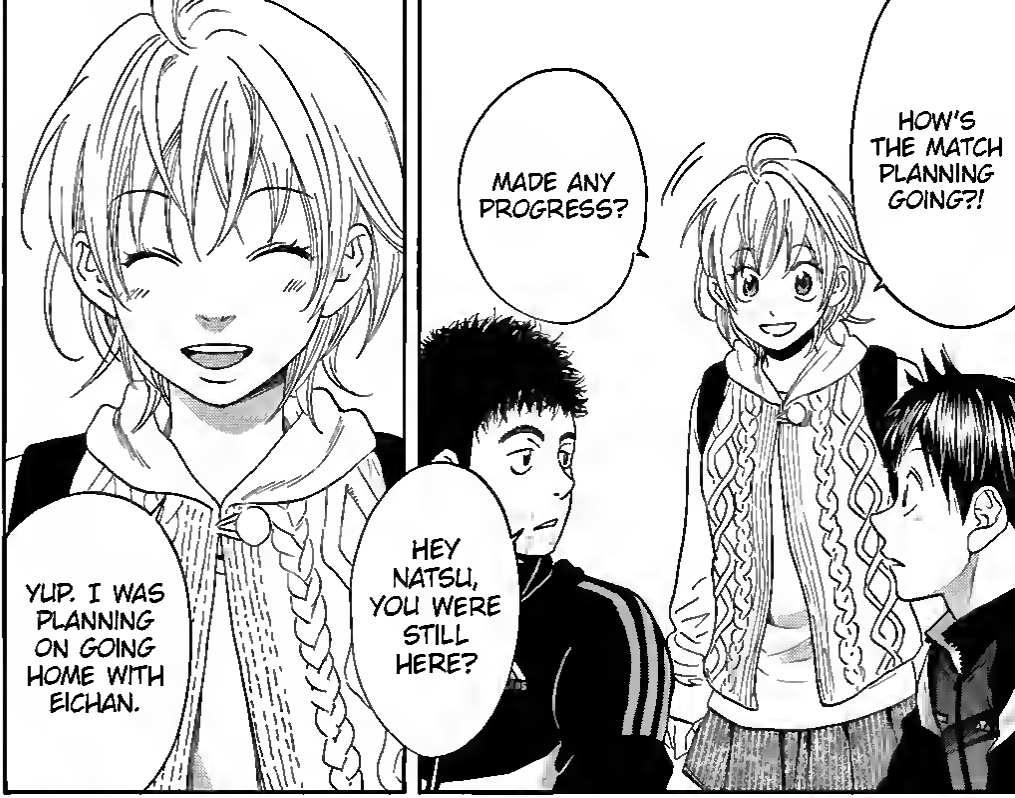
HMM. SEEMS LIKE HE HAS HIS OWN SHARE OF PROBLEMS.

IT CERTAINLY FEELS LIKE THOSE TWO ARE SIMILAR SOMEHOW.

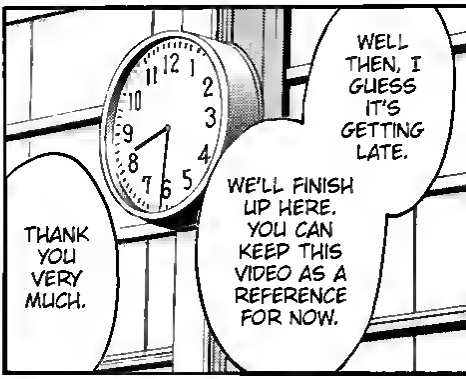

HE'S AMAZING IN HIS OWN WAY.
BUT TO BE SO FIXATED ON STAYING ACTIVE AS A PRO TO THE POINT THAT SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO HIM IS AGAINST IT...
THAT MAKES SENSE...

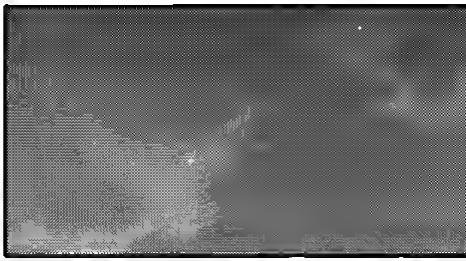
I'M STILL AT THE STAGE WHERE I'M ASPIRING TO BECOME ONE, SO THERE MUST BE A LOT I STILL DON'T KNOW ABOUT.
DOES THAT MEAN BEING A PRO IS REALLY SO APPEALING?

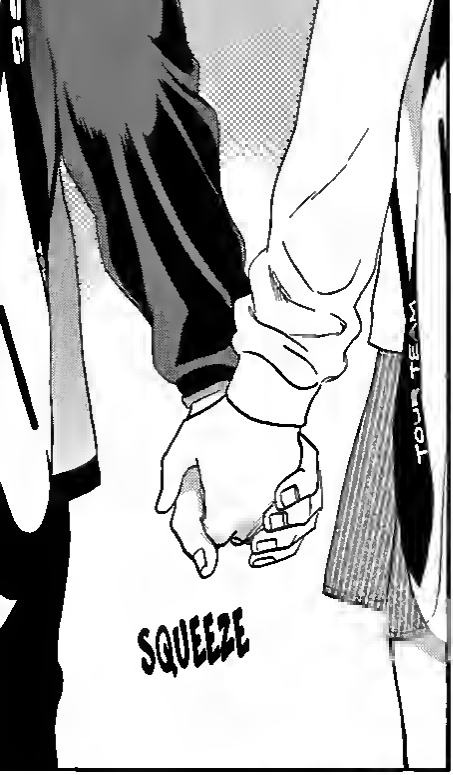
A PRO THAT EVERYONE CAN ACKNOWLEDGE.
I REALLY WANT TO BECOME A PRO SOON.

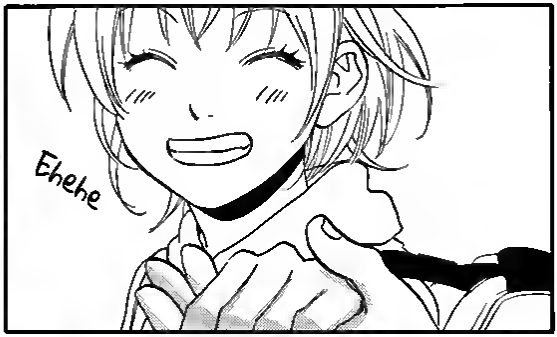

HOW'S THE MATCH PLANNING GOING?!
MADE ANY PROGRESS?
HEY NATSU, YOU WERE STILL HERE?
YUP. I WAS PLANNING ON GOING HOME WITH EICHAN.

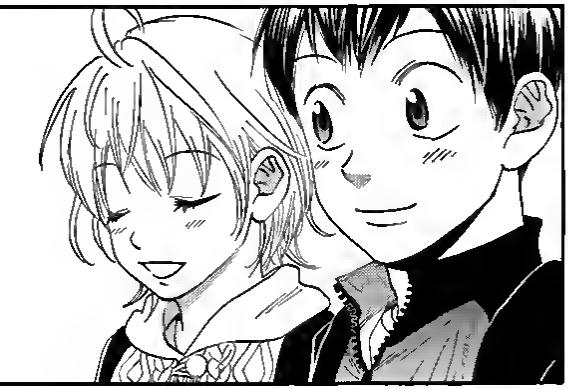
BRRRRR... IT'S BEEN GETTING COLDER LATELY, HUH?

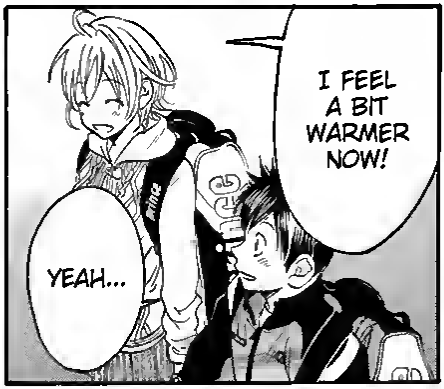

WELL THEN, I GUESS IT'S GETTING LATE.
WE'LL FINISH UP HERE. YOU CAN KEEP THIS VIDEO AS A REFERENCE FOR NOW.
THANK YOU VERY MUCH.



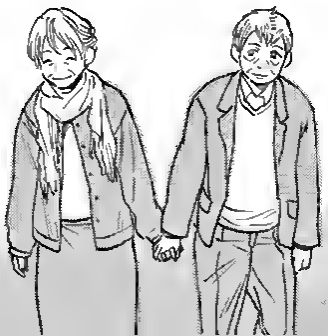








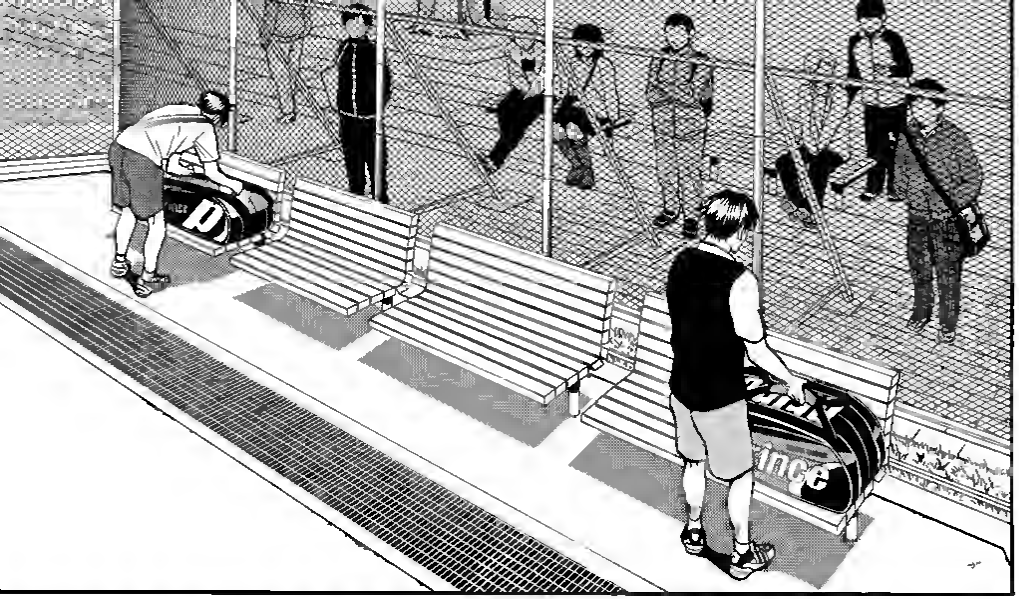
MAYBE SOMETHING LIKE THIS...? NAH, NOT QUITE.



THEY SAY THE TYPICAL CAREER OF A PROFESSIONAL TENNIS PLAYER LASTS UNTIL THEY'RE ABOUT 30, BUT... I HOPE I CAN BE WITH NATCHAN FOREVER.

I'LL DEFINITELY WIN.
YEAH. THANKS.
I CAN'T COME CHEER YOU ON IN PERSON TOMORROW,
BUT I'LL STILL BE ROOTING FOR YOU.

THE NEXT DAY



ガヤ
ガヤ
ガヤ

チラ
チラ

SHE DIDN'T COME AFTER ALL...

ALL JAPAN CHAMPIONSHIP PRELIMINARIES, FINAL ROUND. 3 SET MATCH.
MARUO'S SERVICE PLAY!

I WILL DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF PROS...
TO THE WORLD THAT ASANO-SAN LIVES IN.

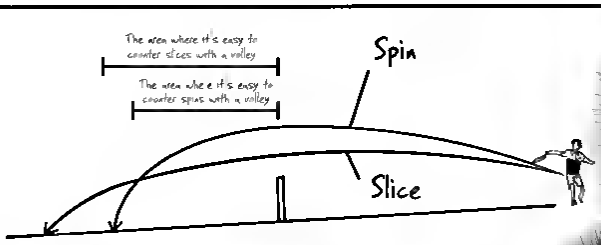
THANK YOU FOR THE MATCH!

I WAS ABLE TO STUDY ASANO-SAN'S OLD HABITS FROM THE RECORDINGS.
I'M MORE THAN AWARE OF HIS INCREDIBLE CAPABILITY AS A PLAYER.
BUT IF I'M NOT ABLE TO SURPASS HIM HERE, THEN THERE'S NO WAY I CAN GO ON TO BE A PRO.

OOPH... HE HITS A GOOD SERVE.
110 KM
I'LL DRIVE IT AT HIM USING SPIN RIGHT AWAY!
SINCE I TOOK THE UPPER HAND FROM MY SERVE...
NOW UP TO THE NET!

KUH.

WHEN HE GETS IN A STICKY SITUATION, HE TENDS TO USE A SLICE.



SLICES HAVE A LONG AIR TIME AND DON'T SINK AS MUCH SO...

I'M AT AN ADVANTAGE CLOSER TO THE NET!!

15 – 0
YES! JUST AS PLANNED!